

Early Bird



Robert Cardin of New Bedford, Mass., arrived with his father at 2 a. m. and was first on line when the sale of Army pigeons at Fort Monmouth began at 8 a. m. Saturday. Above, the ten-year old pigeon enthusiast, with Otto Meyer, Fair Haven, civilian in charge of pigeon training and breeding activities here since World War II, shows one of ten pairs purchased by young Cardin.

Army's Pigeon Sale Attracts People from Several States

FORT MONMOUTH — The last Signal Corps homing pigeon was sold at 11:43 a. m. Saturday, marking the end of military use of the couriers by the United States Army.

Hundreds of homing pigeon fanciers from many distant states including the Midwest, the south and New England, as well as many from nearby Pennsylvania, New York, Delaware and Maryland, along with Jerseyites, were on line at the pigeon breeding and training center here well before 8 a. m., when the sale started.

Despite their early arrival, nearly 200 persons who had hoped to buy the birds, left with their empty crates when all of the 1,018 pigeons were sold out before they could be reached on the long line.

10-Year-Old First

Many young enthusiasts were among the earliest arrivals. First on line was ten-year old Robert Cardin of New Bedford, Mass. Starting from home Friday with his father, Edwin, they arrived at the lofts at 2 a. m. Saturday and young Cardin held his No. 1 position steadfastly.

Weary, but happy on seeing his 20 new winged friends, the young pigeonier who has been training birds for three years, exclaimed, "I have been dreaming about this since last December!" It was then that the Army first announced its decision to inactivate the pigeon training program.

Another youngster, on line since shortly after 6:30 a. m., however, was "sweating" it out as news was circulating that the stock was diminishing. He was Peter Jachera of Somerville, who recently started his own loft. Luck was with him—he was the last customer reached, and he became the proud owner of six females, the very last of the Army pigeons to be sold.

"Tank," who have been viewed by thousands of visitors to the pigeon lofts at Fort Monmouth.

The use of pigeons by the Army was started in the Dakota Territory in 1878. Since then, they have written their own chapter in American history, and they were used in all of the nation's crises, including the Korean conflict. They were at their peak in World War II, when the Army had 56,000 pigeons trained for war missions in all theaters. Rapid advances in electronics are the cause of the Army's pigeon training inactivation.

War Heroes Left

Driving since 7 p. m. Thursday from the Midwest were Anthony Palfi of Hammond, Ind., and Frank Teumer of Calumet City, Ill., racing team of the Polaski racing club, Calumet City, Ill. They arrived at 10 p. m. Friday but were not permitted to remain on the post. When they returned to the lofts at 6 a. m., they found about 50 persons already on line, but were easily reached for their hard-earned purchase of 10 pair.

The pigeons, averaging two to three years in age, were sold on a first-come first-serve basis, each purchaser being permitted to buy from one to ten pair. In all, there were 82 purchasers for the birds sold.

After the sale, excepting for the 15 heroes of World War II, the expanse of white-painted lofts of the Army pigeon center here were emptied and silenced. The honored group will shortly be presented to various public spots throughout the United States. Most famed of the hero birds are "GI Joe," "Caesar" and